



Interpersonal Therapy (IPT)

What is IPT?

Interpersonal Psychotherapy (IPT) is a time-limited psychotherapy that highlights the importance of social roles and relationships in relation to psychological wellbeing. It usually takes place over 16-20 weekly sessions and aims to help you identify the interpersonal situations, events or patterns which are most closely associated with your current difficulties and to support you in making the changes that will help to alleviate psychological symptoms or stress.

The overall aim of IPT is to help you understand how your psychological symptoms and/or your emotional experiences are linked to interpersonal situations while also identifying the impact these experiences may be having upon your relationships and your ability to get what you need from other people. IPT is a change-oriented yet supportive therapy that enables improvements in interpersonal functioning within important relationships. It also considers the role of your wider social network and how you can make the most of available help and support from within existing relationships or by developing new social connections.

What is talked about in IPT?

The first few sessions are spent gathering information and building a detailed picture of the symptoms and/or difficulties you are experiencing. The main focus of discussions with the therapist will be on the “here and now” rather than the past. However, the therapist will also want to spend some time discussing past relationships and experiences which may help with gaining an understanding of your current situation. The therapist will also aim to build a picture of your current relationships and how fluctuations in your mood are linked to interpersonal events. They will then be able to share their understanding with you and help you decide on a focus area to provide the structure for the remainder of the sessions.



What are the main focus areas in IPT?

In IPT there are several 'focus areas' to choose from. These are based on the types of social and interpersonal situations that are the most stressful for people and are often associated with the development of problems such as depression and anxiety. Your therapist will work with you to select a focus area that is most relevant to your current difficulties and will also help you to think about your own specific goals. The four main focus areas are:

- **Interpersonal Sensitivities:** A history of experiencing recurring difficulties in forming or maintaining relationships with other people
- **Interpersonal Dispute:** An unresolved conflict often involving a mismatch of expectations
- **Role transition:** A significant life change, for example, the beginning or ending of a job or a relationship, an illness or a change of home
- **Grief:** Unresolved grief following the loss of a significant person

How does IPT work?

IPT is a time-limited therapy and works by keeping to the agreed focus and helping you to make the interpersonal changes that are likely to have the most impact on your current difficulties. Towards the end of the therapy, you will be able to review the understanding you have gained and any positive changes you have been able to make. Your therapist will also spend some time talking to you about how you can continue with these gains after the therapy has concluded.

What is the Evidence for IPT?

IPT has been extensively researched and has been found to be helpful for a wide range of clients and presenting problems. It is currently recommended by NICE (National Institute for Health & Care Excellence) alongside Cognitive Behavioural Therapy as a therapy for depression and other mental health conditions.



IPT is offered at Brighton and Hove Psychotherapy by Rose Gardner and Kelly Cahill. If you would like further information on IPT or would like to book a session, please contact us.